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UNCLAS MUSCAT 000842

SIPDIS

DEPT FOR NEA/ARPI, NEA/PPD, NEA/P, INR/R/MR

LONDON FOR GOLDRICH

PARIS FOR ZEYA

USCENTCOM FOR PLUSH

FOREIGN PRESS CENTER FOR ASILAS

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: KPAQ KMDR OIIP MU

SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION: DEMOCRACY, MEDIA MISTAKES, AND IRAQ

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Speed Limits  
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¶1. The government-owned Arabic daily "Oman" carried an editorial on May 17 entitled "The Limits of Democracy":

"The trend among most societies nowadays is to concentrate on the large-scale spread of democracy. Public participation, freedom of thought and expression, and the preservation of individual rights and duties are noble aspirations, but must be accomplished without dictatorial pressure. The limits on democracy accepted in Arab and Islamic countries are those endorsed by the people themselves. Freedom, security, stability, and positive public participation should be the goals, not a canned democratic system imposed by external forces with suspect motives."

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Mistakes Were Made  
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¶2. On same day, the privately-owned Arabic daily "al-Watan" published an editorial by the Egyptian writer Abdullah Hamood entitled "No Smoke Without Fire":

"After everyone in the world heard about the Quran's desecration at the hands of American troops in Guantanamo, 'Newsweek' published an apology saying that it made a mistake, and that the U.S. military investigation failed to find any evidence supporting the allegations. Based on the angry reactions of Muslims in different parts of the world, we must ask the question: is there any smoke without fire? Did the incident actually take place? If so, many Americans will feel that the only 'mistake' was in publishing the story."

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Fingers On Iraq's Pulse  
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¶3. "Al-Watan" also ran an editorial on May 21 under the headline "Hidden Hands in Iraq":

"Given the controversy stirred up by the publishing of Saddam Hussein's pictures in a London tabloid, it seems that there are hidden hands trying to move Iraq off course. Perhaps this is an effort to distract attention from the recent losses suffered by the invaders. Whatever the reason, these hidden hands are helped by political realities on the ground: the new Iraqi government cannot provide security as promised, and the foreign troops could not establish stability as prescribed by international law."

STEWART